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(54) Coated inserts for rough milling

(57) The present invention discloses coated milling inserts particularly useful for milling of grey cast iron with or without cast skin under wet conditions at low and moderate cutting speeds and milling of nodular cast iron and compacted graphite iron with or without cast skin under wet conditions at moderate cutting speeds.

The inserts are characterised by a WC-Co cemented carbide with a low content of cubic carbides and a highly W-alloyed binder phase and a coating including an inner layer of TiC_xN_y with columnar grains followed by a layer of $\kappa-Al_2O_3$ and a top layer of TiN.

EP 1 205 569 A2

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to coated cemented carbide cutting tool inserts, particularly useful for milling of grey cast iron under wet conditions, preferably at low and moderate cutting speeds but also for milling of nodular cast iron and compacted graphite iron under wet conditions at moderate cutting speeds.

[0002] It is well known that for cemented carbide cutting tool inserts used in the machining of cast irons, the cutting edge is worn by different wear mechanisms such as chemical and abrasive wear but the cutting edge is generally also subjected to crack formation due to the intermittent cutting load, resulting in so-called chippings and edge fractures caused by different types of cracks in the inserts.

[0003] Different types of crack patterns may appear during machining of cast irons. One important type is the so-called comb cracks, which are formed perpendicularly to the cutting edge. The formation of comb cracks is strongly influenced by the cooling conditions during cutting. In particular, the use of fluid coolant increases the tendency to formation of comb cracks, often also called thermal cracks. The use of fluid coolant leads to large temperature gradients and thermal tensile stresses in the insert surface, increasing the tendency for formation of surface cracks, in particular in the case of coated cutting tool inserts where the hard but brittle ceramic surface coating is prone to crack under conditions involving unfavourable thermal tensile stresses. Cracks in the coating increase the risk for chipping and edge fractures and for flaking of the coating.

[0004] Characteristic for cast irons is the so-called surface skin, the surface zone of the cast component often contains a structure that deviates considerably from the bulk structure and also contains hard inclusion and sand from the mould. In this case a coated cemented carbide insert must be used including a substrate with the proper toughness of the cemented carbide grade and on the surface a wear resistant refractory coating.

[0005] Furthermore, different cutting conditions such as cutting speed, depth of cut, cutting feed rate and also external factors such as vibrations of the work piece and the above mentioned surface zone in iron casting, etc., require a plurality of different properties of the cutting edge.

[0006] Commercial cemented carbide tool inserts for milling of cast irons under wet conditions are usually optimised with respect to one or two of the wear types observed.

[0007] US 5,912,051 discloses a coated cutting insert particularly useful for dry milling of grey cast iron.

[0008] US 5,863,640 discloses a coated turning insert particularly useful for intermittent turning in low alloyed steel.

[0009] In US 6,062,776 is disclosed a coated cemented carbide cutting tool particularly designed for the wet and dry milling of workpieces of low and medium alloyed steels or stainless steels, with or without abrasive surface zones, in machining operations requiring a high degree of toughness of the carbide cutting edge. The external cutting conditions are characterised by complex shapes of the workpiece, vibrations, chip hammering, recutting of the chips etc.

[0010] In US 6,177,178 is disclosed a coated cemented carbide cutting tool particularly designed for the wet and dry milling of low and medium alloyed steels.

[0011] WO 01/16388 discloses a coated insert particularly useful for milling in low and medium alloyed steels with or without abrasive surface zones during dry or wet conditions at high cutting speed, and milling hardened steels at high cutting speed.

[0012] It has now surprisingly been found that by combining many different features cutting tool inserts, preferably for milling, can be obtained with excellent cutting performance when milling grey cast iron using fluid coolant at low and moderate cutting speeds as well as in milling of nodular and compacted graphite iron using fluid coolant at moderate cutting speeds, in iron castings with or without cast skin.

[0013] The cutting tool inserts according to the present invention show improved properties with respect to the different wear types prevailing at these cutting conditions as earlier mentioned.

[0014] The cutting tool inserts according to the present invention consist of: a cemented carbide body with a relatively high W-alloyed binder phase and with a well balanced chemical composition and grain size of the WC, a columnar TiC_xN_y -layer, a $K-Al_2O_3$ -layer, a TiN-layer and optionally followed by smoothening the cutting edges by brushing the edges.

[0015] According to the present invention coated cutting tool inserts are provided consisting of a cemented carbide body with a composition of 7.3-7.9 wt-% Co, preferably 7.6 wt-% Co, 1.0-1.8 wt-% cubic carbides, preferably 1.4-1.7 wt-% cubic carbides of the metals Ta and Nb and balance WC. The average grain size of the WC is in the range of about 1.5-2.5 μm , preferably about 1.8 μm .

[0016] The cobalt binder phase is rather highly alloyed with W. The content of W in the binder phase can be expressed as the

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$$CW\text{-ratio} = M_s / (\text{wt-\% Co} \cdot 0.0161)$$

where M_s is the saturation magnetization of the cemented carbide body in kA/m and wt-% Co is the weight percentage

of Co in the cemented carbide. The CW-value is a function of the W content in the Co binder phase. A high CW-value corresponds to a low W-content in the binder phase.

[0017] It has now been found according to the present invention that improved cutting performance is achieved if the cemented carbide body has a CW-ratio of 0.86-0.94. The cemented carbide may contain small amounts, <3 vol-%, of η -phase (M_6C), without any detrimental effect.

[0018] The coating comprises

- a first (innermost) layer of $TiC_xN_yO_z$ with $x+y+z=1$, $y>x$ and $z<0.2$, preferably $y>0.8$ and $z=0$, with equiaxed grains with size <0.5 μm and a total thickness <1.5 μm preferably >0.1 μm ,
- a layer of TiC_xN_y with $x+y=1$, $x>0.3$ and $y>0.3$, preferably $x\geq 0.5$, with a thickness of 1-4 μm , preferably 2-2.7 μm , with columnar grains and with an average diameter of <5 μm , preferably 0.1-2 μm ,
- a layer of a smooth, fine-grained (grain size about 0.5-2 μm) Al_2O_3 consisting essentially of the κ -phase. However, the layer may contain small amounts (<5 vol-%) of other phases such as θ - or the α -phase as determined by XRD-measurement. The Al_2O_3 -layer has a thickness of 1-2.5 μm , preferably 1.2-1.7 μm and
- a further 0.5-1.0 μm thick layer of TiN. This outermost layer of TiN has a surface roughness $R_{max}\leq 0.4 \mu m$ over a length of 10 μm . The TiN-layer is preferably removed along the cutting edge and the underlying alumina layer may be partly or completely removed along the cutting edge.

[0019] The present invention also relates to a method of making coated cutting tool inserts consisting of a cemented carbide body with a composition of 7.3-7.9 wt-% Co, preferably 7.6 wt-% Co, 1.0-1.8 wt-% cubic carbides, preferably 1.4-1.7 wt-% cubic carbides of the metals Ta and Nb and balance WC. The average grain size of the WC is in the range of about 1.5-2.5 μm , preferably about 1.8 μm .

[0020] Onto the cemented carbide body is deposited

- a first (innermost) layer of $TiC_xN_yO_z$ with $x+y+z=1$, $y>x$ and $z<0.2$, preferably $y>0.8$ and $z=0$, with equiaxed grains with size <0.5 μm and a total thickness <1.5 μm , preferably >0.1 μm , using known CVD-methods,
- a layer of TiC_xN_y with $x+y=1$, $x>0.3$ and $y>0.3$, preferably $x\geq 0.5$, with a thickness of 1-4 μm , preferably 2-2.7 μm , with columnar grains and with an average diameter of <5 μm , preferably 0.1-2 μm using preferably MTCVD-technique (using acetonitrile as the carbon and nitrogen source for forming the layer in the temperature range of 700-900 °C). The exact conditions, however, depend to a certain extent on the design of the equipment used,
- a smooth Al_2O_3 -layer essentially consisting of κ - Al_2O_3 is deposited under conditions disclosed in e.g. US 5,674,564. The Al_2O_3 layer has a thickness of 1-2.5 μm , preferably 1.2-1.7 μm and
- a 0.5-1.0 μm thick layer of TiN with a surface roughness $R_{max}\leq 0.4 \mu m$ over a length of 10 μm .

[0021] The smooth coating surface is obtained by a gentle wet-blasting the coating surface with fine grained (400-150 mesh) alumina powder or by brushing the edges with brushes based on e.g. SiC as disclosed e.g. in US 5,861,210. The TiN-layer is preferably removed along the cutting edge and the underlying alumina layer may be partly or completely removed along the cutting edge.

[0022] The invention also relates to the use of cutting tool inserts according to above for wet milling using fluid coolant of cast irons such as grey cast iron, compacted graphite iron and nodular iron particularly grey cast iron at a cutting speed of 70-180 m/min and a feed of 0.1-0.4 mm/tooth depending on cutting speed and insert geometry.

Example 1

[0023] A. Cemented carbide milling inserts in accordance with the invention with the composition 7.6 wt-% Co, 1.25 wt-% TaC, 0.30 wt-% NbC and balance WC with average grain size of 1.8 μm , with a binder phase alloyed with W corresponding to a CW-ratio of 0.87 were coated with a 0.5 μm equiaxed $TiC_{0.05}N_{0.95}$ -layer (with a high nitrogen content corresponding to an estimated C/N-ratio of 0.05) followed by a 2.6 μm thick $TiC_{0.54}N_{0.46}$ -layer, with columnar grains by using MTCVD-technique (temperature 850-885 °C and CH_3CN as the carbon/nitrogen source). In subsequent steps during the same coating cycle, a 1.3 μm thick layer of Al_2O_3 was deposited using a temperature 970 °C and a concentration of H_2S dopant of 0.4 % as disclosed in US 5,674,564. A thin (0.5 μm) layer of TiN was deposited on top according to known CVD-technique. XRD-measurement showed that the Al_2O_3 -layer consisted of 100% κ -phase.

[0024] The coated inserts were brushed using a nylon straw brush containing SiC grains. Examination of the brushed inserts in a light optical microscope revealed that the outermost, thin TiN-layer and some of the Al_2O_3 -layer had been brushed away along the very cutting edge, leaving there a smooth Al_2O_3 -surface. Coating thickness measurements on cross sectioned, brushed inserts showed that the outermost TiN-layer and roughly half the Al_2O_3 -layer had been removed along the edge line.

[0025] B. Commercial cemented carbide milling inserts with the composition 9 wt-% Co, 1.23 wt-% TaC, 0.30 wt-%

NbC and balance WC with a WC grain size in average of 1.7 μm , with a binder phase alloyed with W corresponding to a CW-ratio of 0.92 were coated with an innermost 0.5 μm equiaxed TiN-layer followed by a 5.5 μm thick Ti(C,N)-layer, with columnar grains by using MTCVD-technique and outermost a 4 μm thick layer of Al_2O_3 . XRD-measurement showed that the Al_2O_3 -layer consisted of 100 % α -phase.

5 [0026] C. Cemented carbide milling inserts with the composition 6 wt-% Co and balance WC with average grain size 1.8 μm , with a binder phase alloyed with W corresponding to a CW-ratio of 0.90 were coated with a 2 μm thick TiC-layer using known CVD-technique. In subsequent steps during the same coating cycle, a 1 μm thick layer of Al_2O_3 was deposited.

10 [0027] Inserts from A, B and C were tested in face milling of grey cast iron cylinder heads.

10	Operation Work-piece Material Cutting speed Feed rate/tooth Depth of cut Insert-style Note	Face milling - roughing Cylinder head Pearlitic grey cast iron, alloyed, 116 m/min 0.32 mm/rev 2 mm TNEF 1204AN-CA Wet, single tooth milling
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20	Results	Tool-life, number of passes per edge
25	Grade A : (invention)	99
	Grade B : (prior art)	60
	Grade C : (prior art)	49

20 [0028] Tool-life criterion was chippings and fractures of the edges.

30 Example 2

30 [0029] D. Cemented carbide milling inserts in accordance with the invention with the composition 7.6 wt-% Co, 1.25 wt-% TaC, 0.30 wt-% NbC and balance WC with an average grain size of 1.75 μm , with a binder phase alloyed with W corresponding to a CW-ratio of 0.88 were coated with a 0.5 μm equiaxed $\text{TiC}_{0.05}\text{N}_{0.95}$ -layer (with a high nitrogen content corresponding to an estimated C/N-ratio of 0.05) followed by a 2.0 μm thick $\text{TiC}_{0.54}\text{N}_{0.46}$ -layer, with columnar grains by using MTCVD-technique (temperature 850-885 °C and CH_3CN as the carbon/nitrogen source). In subsequent steps during the same coating cycle, a 1.4 μm thick layer of Al_2O_3 was deposited using a temperature 970 °C and a concentration of H_2S dopant of 0.4 % as disclosed in US 5,674,564. A thin (0.5 μm) layer of TiN was deposited on top according to known CVD-technique. XRD-measurement showed that the Al_2O_3 -layer consisted of 100 % κ -phase.

40 [0030] The coated inserts were brushed using a nylon straw brush containing SiC grains. Examination of the brushed inserts in a light optical microscope showed that the outermost, thin TiN-layer and some of the Al_2O_3 -layer had been brushed away along the very cutting edge, leaving there a smooth Al_2O_3 -surface. Coating thickness measurements on cross sectioned, brushed inserts showed that the outermost TiN-layer and roughly half the Al_2O_3 -layer had been removed along the edge line.

45 [0031] Inserts from D and C were tested in face milling of grey cast iron cylinder heads.

50	Operation Work-piece Material Cutting speed Feed rate/tooth Depth of cut Insert-style Note	Face milling - roughing Cylinder head Pearlitic grey cast iron, alloyed, 116 m/min 0.32 mm/rev 1.5-2 mm TNEF 1204AN-CA Wet, 13 teeth, unstable tendencies
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Results	Tool-life, number of component per edge set
Grade D : (invention)	685
Grade C : (prior art)	475

5 [0032] Tool-life criterion was edge break-out on the work piece due to chipping and high flank wear of the edges.

10 Example 3

[0033] E. Cemented carbide milling inserts in accordance with the invention, identical to the inserts described in D (Example 2), except for that the coating not was brushed.

[0034] Inserts from D and E were tested in face milling of grey cast iron cylinder heads.

Operation	Face milling - roughing
Work-piece	Cylinder head
Material	Pearlitic grey cast iron, alloyed,
Cutting speed	116 m/min
Feed rate/tooth	0.32 mm/rev
Depth of cut	1.5-2 mm
Insert-style	TNEF 1204AN-CA
Note	Wet, 13 teeth, unstable tendencies

Results	Tool-life, number of component per edge set
Grade D : (invention)	685
Grade E : (outside invention)	570

25 [0035] Tool-life criterion was edge break-out on the work piece due to chipping and high flank wear of the edges.

30 Example 4

35 [0036] F. Cemented carbide milling inserts in accordance with the invention with the composition 7.6 wt-% Co, 1.25 wt-% TaC, 0.30 wt-% NbC and balance WC with a grain size in average of 1.79 μm , with a binder phase alloyed with W corresponding to a CW-ratio of 0.86 were coated with a 0.5 μm equiaxed $\text{TiC}_{0.05}\text{N}_{0.95}$ -layer (with a high nitrogen content corresponding to an estimated C/N-ratio of 0.05) followed by a 2.7 μm thick $\text{TiC}_{0.54}\text{N}_{0.46}$ -layer, with columnar grains by using MTCVD-technique (temperature 850-885 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ and CH_3CN as the carbon/nitrogen source). In subsequent steps during the same coating cycle, a 1.2 μm thick layer of Al_2O_3 was deposited using a temperature 970 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ and a concentration of H_2S dopant of 0.4 % as disclosed in US 5,674,564. A thin (0.8 μm) layer of TiN was deposited on top according to known CVD-technique. XRD-measurement showed that the Al_2O_3 -layer consisted of 100 % κ -phase.

40 [0037] The coated inserts were brushed using a nylon straw brush containing SiC grains. Examination of the brushed inserts in a light optical microscope showed that the outermost, thin TiN-layer and some of the Al_2O_3 -layer had been brushed away along the very cutting edge, leaving there a smooth Al_2O_3 -surface. Coating thickness measurements on cross sectioned, brushed inserts showed that the outermost TiN-layer and roughly half the Al_2O_3 -layer had been removed along the edge line.

45 [0038] G. Commercial cemented carbide milling inserts with the composition of 8 wt-% Co, 0.1 wt-% TiC, 1.7 wt-% TaC, 0.1 wt-% NbC, and balance WC and CW-ratio of 0.86. The WC-grain size was 1.74 μm . The inserts were coated with a 0.5 μm TiN-layer followed by a 1.5 μm thick TiC-layer and finally followed by a 0.5 μm TiN-layer.

50 [0039] H. Commercial cemented carbide cutting inserts with the composition of 8 wt-% Co, 0.1 wt-% TiC, 1.8 wt-% TaC, 0.1 wt-% NbC and balance WC, CW-ratio of 0.86 and WC-grain size 1.71 μm were coated with a 5 μm TiAlN-layer deposited by PVD-technique.

55 [0040] Inserts from F, G and H were tested in face milling of an alloyed pearlitic grey cast iron cylinder head.

Operation	Face milling - roughing
Work-piece	Cylinder head

(continued)

Material	Pearlitic grey cast iron, alloyed.
Cutting speed	116 m/min
Feed rate/tooth	0.32 mm/rev
Depth of cut	2 mm
Insert-style	TNEF 1204AN
Note	Wet, single tooth milling

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Results	Tool-life, number of passes per edge
Grade F: (invention)	78
Grade G: (prior art)	60
Grade H: (prior art)	58

[0041] Tool-life criterion was chippings and edge fractures of the edges.

Example 5

[0042] I. Cemented carbide milling inserts in accordance with the invention with the composition 7.6 wt-% Co, 1.25 wt-% TaC, 0.30 wt-% NbC and balance WC with a grain size in average of 1.75 μm , with a binder phase alloyed with W corresponding to a CW-ratio of 0.90 were coated with a 0.5 μm equiaxed $\text{TiC}_{0.05}\text{N}_{0.95}$ -layer (with a high nitrogen content corresponding to an estimated C/N-ratio of 0.05) followed by a 2.7 μm thick $\text{TiC}_{0.54}\text{N}_{0.46}$ -layer, with columnar grains by using MTCVD-technique (temperature 850-885 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ and CH_3CN as the carbon/nitrogen source). In subsequent steps during the same coating cycle, a 1.7 μm thick layer of Al_2O_3 was deposited using a temperature 970 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ and a concentration of H_2S dopant of 0.4 % as disclosed in US 5,674,564. A thin (0.7 μm) layer of TiN was deposited on top according to known CVD-technique. XRD-measurement showed that the Al_2O_3 -layer consisted of 100 % κ -phase.

[0043] The coated inserts were brushed using a nylon straw brush containing SiC grains. Examination of the brushed inserts in a light optical microscope showed that the outermost, thin TiN-layer and some of the Al_2O_3 -layer had been brushed away along the very cutting edge, leaving there a smooth Al_2O_3 -surface. Coating thickness measurements on cross sectioned, brushed inserts showed that the outermost TiN-layer and roughly half the Al_2O_3 -layer had been removed along the edge line.

[0044] Inserts from I and G were tested in face milling of pearlitic grey cast iron engine blocks.

Operation	Face milling - roughing
Work-piece	Engine block.
Material	Pearlitic grey cast iron, un-alloyed
Cutting speed	106 m/min
Feed rate/tooth	0.20 mm/rev
Depth of cut	3 mm
Insert-style	TNEF 1204AN
Note	Wet milling, 56 teeth per set

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Results	Tool-life, number of components per set
Grade I: (invention)	975
Grade G: (prior art)	700

[0045] Tool-life criterion was edge break-out on the work piece due to chipping and high flank wear of the edges.

Example 6

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[0046] Inserts from I and B were tested in face milling of pearlitic nodular cast iron gearbox housing.

[0047] Inserts from I and B were tested in face milling of pearlitic nodular cast iron gearbox housing.

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Operation:	Face milling - roughing
Work-piece:	Gear box housing.
Material:	Pearlitic nodular cast iron, alloyed
Cutting speed:	137 m/min
Feed rate/tooth:	0.15 mm/rev
Depth of cut:	5 mm
Insert-style:	TNEF 1204AN-CA
Note:	Wet milling, 20 teeth, unstable tendencies

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Results	Tool-life, minutes of tool life per edge set
Grade I : (invention)	105
Grade B : (prior art)	60

[0047] Tool-life criterion was crack formation and chippings of the edges.

20 Example 7

[0048] Inserts from I and C were tested in face milling of nodular cast iron engine block component

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Operation	Face milling - roughing
Work-piece	Engine block, bearing part
Material	Nodular cast iron
Cutting speed	93 m/min
Feed rate/tooth	0.25 mm/rev
Insert-style	TNEF 1204AN-CA
Note	Wet milling, 26 teeth

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Results	Tool-life, number of components per edge set
Grade I: (invention)	38000
Grade C: (prior art)	20000

Tool-life criterion was burr and spalling on the work piece.

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Claims

1. A cutting tool insert for milling of grey cast iron with or without cast skin under wet conditions at low and moderate cutting speeds and milling of nodular cast iron and compacted graphite iron under wet conditions at moderate cutting speeds comprising a cemented carbide body and a coating **characterized in that** said cemented carbide body comprises WC, 7.3-7.9 wt-% Co and 1.0-1.8 wt-% cubic carbides of Ta and Nb and a highly W-alloyed binder phase with a CW-ratio of 0.86-0.94 and **in that** said coating comprises
 - a first, innermost layer of $TiC_xN_yO_z$ with $x+y+z=1$, $y>x$ and $z<0.2$, preferably $y>0.8$ and $z=0$, with equiaxed grains with size $<0.5 \mu m$ and a total thickness of $0.1-1.5 \mu m$,
 - a layer of TiC_xN_y with $x+y=1$, $x>0.3$ and $y>0.3$, preferably $x\geq 0.5$, with a thickness of $1-4 \mu m$ with columnar grains with an average diameter of $<5 \mu m$,
 - a layer of a smooth, fine-grained, $0.5-2 \mu m$ $\kappa-Al_2O_3$ with a thickness of $1-2.5 \mu m$ and
 - an outer layer of TiN with a thickness of $0.5-1.0 \mu m$.
2. Milling insert according to claim 1
characterized in that the cemented carbide contains 1.4-1.7 wt-% carbides of Ta and Nb.

3. Milling insert according to any of the preceding claims
characterized in that the outermost TiN-layer is removed along the cutting edge.

4. Method of making a milling insert comprising a cemented carbide body and a coating characterised in that the
5 WC-Co-based cemented carbide body comprises WC, 7.3-7.9 wt-% Co and 1.0-1.8 wt-% cubic carbides of Ta and
Nb and a highly W-alloyed binder phase with a CW-ratio of 0.86-0.94, the method comprising the steps of:
10 - depositing by a CVD-method a first, innermost layer of $TiC_xN_yO_z$ with $x+y+z=1$, $y>x$ and $z<0.2$ having an
equiaxed grain structure with a size $<0.5 \mu m$ and a total thickness of $0.1-1.5 \mu m$,
15 - depositing by a MTCVD-technique a layer of TiC_xN_y with $x+y=1$, $x>0.3$ and $y>0.3$ with a thickness of $1-4 \mu m$
having a columnar grain structure with an average diameter of $<5 \mu m$, wherein the MTCVD-technique uses
acetonitrile as a source of carbon and nitrogen for forming a layer in a temperature range of $700-900^\circ C$,
- depositing a layer of a smooth $\kappa-Al_2O_3$ with a thickness of $1-2.5 \mu m$ and
- depositing an outer layer of TiN with a thickness of $0.51.0 \mu m$.

15 5. Method according to the previous claim
characterized in that said cemented carbide body contains 1.4-1.7 wt-% carbides of Ta and Nb.

20 6. Method according to any of the claims 4 and 5
characterized in that the outermost TiN-layer is removed along the cutting edge.

25 7. Use of a cutting tool insert according to claims 1-3 for wet milling using fluid coolant of cast irons such as grey cast
iron, compacted graphite iron and nodular iron particularly grey cast iron at a cutting speed of $70-180 \text{ m/min}$ and
a feed of $0.1-0.4 \text{ mm/tooth}$ depending on cutting speed and insert geometry.

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